



Rochdale
Boroughwide Housing

Delivering Excellent Services -
Building Stronger Communities



In Touch

Our annual report 2010

Our annual report



Joan Turner

Hi. My name is Joan Turner and I'm a Council tenant living on Brotherton in Rochdale. I'm also a volunteer on the Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) Tenants Editorial Panel. It's the Panel's job to make sure RBH newsletters, leaflets and other publications, including this report, are presented in an attractive and easy to read way and contain the information tenants need.

This year's report looks and feels a bit different and that's because from 1st April 2010 Social Landlords or Registered Providers as they are now known, are regulated by a new Government body called the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). The TSA has worked with lots of tenants nationally to develop a set of Standards which it expects all services provided by landlords to meet.

These Standards are:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Home
- Tenancy
- Value For Money
- Governance and Financial Viability.

This report explains each Standard, how we meet them and our plans to develop and improve services in line with these Standards.

The Editorial Panel has worked closely with RBH to produce this annual report. We have done our best to keep the jargon to an absolute minimum. If you see a word you don't understand then you can find a simple explanation in our jargon buster on page 26.

We hope you find this report an enjoyable and interesting read and if you would like more information about the TSA, the Service Standards or anything else in this report please see page 27 for details of who to contact.

Joan Turner.



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Welcome



Gareth Swarbrick



Noel Chambers

Welcome to In Touch, which sets out our achievements over the past year and our future plans for working with you to further develop and enhance our services.

RBH is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), which together with the three local Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) manages all the housing owned by the Council.

We have a lot to be proud of and in the last year we have:

- Worked with you to improve the quality of life across the borough.
- Started building new homes.
- Secured significant grant funding for improving existing homes.
- Had a record year for rent collection.
- Significantly increased customer satisfaction on a number of key measures.

However, we are not complacent. We know we have to continue to strengthen our approach to involving customers so that what we do is informed and guided by you. This means finding new ways of working with you. You can read more about this in the Involving tenants section.

We spend a lot of time and effort comparing what we do and how we perform with other similar landlords. We know that there is much we can learn from the success of others and we will continue to be a learning organisation.

We would like to thank members of the Tenants Editorial Panel for their input in developing and compiling this report.

We look forward to the continued support of all our customers and working together we can continue to further improve RBH services and standards over the coming years.

Handwritten signature of Gareth Swarbrick in blue ink.

Handwritten signature of Noel Chambers in blue ink.

Gareth Swarbrick (Chief Executive) & Noel Chambers (Chair of the Board)

Involving tenants

What we do:

We work with the tenants, leaseholders and home owners on our estates to provide a variety of opportunities for them to influence, shape, develop and improve our services.

Our Customer Involvement Team also work closely with our 45 Tenants' and Residents' Associations, providing advice, training and support.

We have three Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) who are responsible for the management of properties on the Cloverhall, Hollin and Turf Hill estates.

We encourage people to play an active role in their communities and support 18 community bases which are run by Tenants' and Residents' Associations and provide a wide range of activities and events for their local community.

We offer lots of formal consultation and involvement via forums such as the Environmental Steering Group, Disability Working Group and Area Panels – and tenants are key members of our Board.

We also hold informal, fun occasions such as the annual Celebration and Information Day and Open Days.

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard is about:

- Providing excellent customer service, choice about the services you receive and ensuring you can access those services easily
- Offering all tenants the opportunity to be involved in the management of their home
- Having a clear and accessible complaints policy.



African dance and drum entertainment at the Celebration and Information Day



Tenant representatives achieve food hygiene certificates

Involving tenants

What we did in 2009/10:

- Carried out a study to see what you thought about getting involved and to look at enabling more people to influence and scrutinise future priorities and spending. One outcome of this study is the establishment of 'RBH Involve', a consultation club with over 500 members. This club was asked to review our complaints system and 144 people took part. As a result of their feedback we will be reducing our timescale for responding to your complaints from 15 working days to 10 and you will now be able to choose how you would prefer us to respond i.e. in writing, verbally or by email.
- Set up the Investment and Involvement Commission, with tenants drawn from the Board and Area Panels, which is exploring the best options for securing long term investment in housing stock and neighbourhoods. The Commission is contributing to the Council's objectives in making the borough a better place as well as maximising tenant involvement in decision making.
- Consulted 1,100 of you by telephone about how we collect water charges as part of the rent. 94% of you said the current arrangements should continue.
- Consulted tenants and prospective tenants for our review of the allocations policy. Some of these people helped us develop a wider postal survey, in partnership with Salford University, and carry out an Equality Impact Assessment. The consultation framework we used was recognised as best practice by both the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) and has been adopted as their preferred method of consultation.
- Gave 18 Community Cohesion grants totalling £11,350 to enable groups to carry out events and activities that brought people together and united the local community.
- In the STATUS survey, 77% of you said RBH was good at keeping you informed about things that might affect you as a tenant and 58%, (an increase of 3% from our previous survey), were satisfied with the opportunities for participation in management and decision making.

GRANTS FOR TENANTS

The Area Panels approved numerous one off grants totalling £8,585 for Tenants' and Residents' Associations to support community involvement.

These were used for a variety of things including installing notice boards on their estates, trips, fun days and providing IT training and facilities. Some groups purchased play equipment for young people or garden furniture for older residents like these Thistleyfield residents who had a grant of £376.19 to buy garden furniture and make better use of their garden and outdoor space.

Miss Pat Hull, Chair of the Tenants Association said: "We are delighted with this grant from RBH. Many of our tenants make use of this garden furniture and those who can't get out very far can at least sit with friends and enjoy the sunshine".



Thistleyfield residents enjoy the sun

Involving tenants

Some new things we will do in 2010/11:

- Implement a new compliments, comments and complaints service that reflects the TSA standards and incorporates feedback from our consultation with RBH Involve members.
- Introduce our Looking Local service. This will enable you to access information and services through your digital TV service.
- Work with you to develop more opportunities for you to be involved.



Supporting community activities



Fun at the Information and Celebration Day

TENANTS ACHIEVEMENTS CELEBRATED

This year nearly 400 tenants, residents and leaseholders attended the annual Celebration and Information Day and took part in the activities. The day was planned by a Tenant and Resident led Steering Group and was a chance for tenants to meet, express their views and have fun taking part in a variety of activities. It was also an opportunity for us to find out more about the views of young people, using multimedia equipment, whilst they enjoyed activities on the 'Where It's At' youth bus.

Ken Eaton-Dykes of Lonsdale Court said: "There was an incredible amount going on, I was surprised that the whole of the Town Hall was taken up".



The 'Where It's At' youth bus

Our neighbourhoods and communities

What we do:

We employ a dedicated caretaking team who keep communal areas clean and tidy. Grounds maintenance contractors work alongside them and are responsible for cutting grass and maintaining green areas. Tenants, Councillors and other agencies active on our estates are invited to join the Housing Officer on regular estate walkabouts to identify any environmental problems or concerns and ensure they are dealt with.

Through our Communities First programme we work with communities and local schools to keep estates clean and tidy. This includes our 'Pick n Party' litter picking activities, 'Dig It' planting grants and the 'RBH in Bloom' gardening competition.

Our Creating Great Neighbourhoods programme involves tenants and residents in discussing and approving a £9 million, five year programme of environmental works to improve the quality of life and reduce ASB and nuisance on our estates. We use this budget in two ways - Quick Wins funding supports smaller projects on estates across the borough, while an environmental audit has identified those estates where larger scale works are taking place.

We are the only ALMO to have an in-house Legal Services and Enforcement Team which works closely with Housing Officers and other agencies to address the causes of ASB and then take action against perpetrators. This plays a major part in helping the Council deliver its Safer Communities Plan.

Our Priority Area Team provides a range of services from its Drop-In centres on Kirkholt and Lower Falinge. The Kirkholt Drop-in Centre, which provides a thriving base for the community and agencies, had over 20,000 contacts in 2009/10.

In the STATUS survey you said that ASB was one of your top three priorities. Your neighbourhood was also important to you with rubbish and litter being an issue.

The STATUS Survey also revealed that 81% of customers were satisfied with the neighbourhood they live in (an increase of 5% from the previous year). This put our performance in the top 25% of ALMOs.

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard is about:

- **Keeping neighbourhood and communal areas clean and safe by working with you and other agencies**
- **Working with our partners to promote social, environmental and economic well being in our neighbourhoods**
- **Working with others to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB).**



"Knowing that I'm learning while helping the public is very rewarding" says Luke Kelly, age 19, from our Green Team

Our neighbourhoods and communities

What we did in 2009/10:

- The Area Panels committed £625,000 to small scale environmental Quick Wins schemes such as fencing, car parking and security lighting and over £400,000 on large scale environmental improvements.
- Signed a revised agreement with the Council's Environmental Management service to improve communal grass cutting and green areas maintenance. One change has been an increased number of cuts to take into account climate change.
- Recognised that we needed to do more to support witnesses and victims of ASB, so we employed three Witness Support Officers to work alongside our Enforcement Officers and offer support, encouragement and practical advice. The STATUS survey showed that 67.9% of tenants felt supported by our staff when they reported ASB. This is an increase of 5.2% on the previous year.
- Introduced ASB Focus Groups for those people who used the service and as a result of their feedback you will be able to report ASB to us online.
- Established a partnership with Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale and the Greater Manchester Employment Coalition to set up a 'Green Team' made up of unemployed people aged 18-24, who are able to carry out small to medium sized environmental projects on our estates. The Team has undertaken over 50 projects including clearing waste land, improving and maintaining pathways, fencing and paving works. Four of the team have gone on to secure longer term employment.



Working with local communities to improve the environment

THE 1 SHOP

A Council consultation with residents and agencies in the Lower Falinge area identified key issues including isolation, failure to engage with services and unemployment. We responded by expanding the successful Priority Areas Team from Kirkholt and we opened The 1 Shop on the estate, in partnership with the police. The Shop was launched through a fun day organised by the local community.

It provides a drop-in advice and support service, confidential interview space and weekly sessions with employment support agencies, (42 people have so far been referred for volunteering or training opportunities). There are also debt and legal advisors and drug and alcohol counsellors. There is free internet access and a freephone to other agencies. This has been so successful that we will be looking to roll it out onto the Freehold estate in 2010.



Fun Day launches The 1 Shop

Our neighbourhoods and communities

Some new things we will do in 2010/11:

- Fund an Employment Advisor to tackle unemployment and assist people to access education, employment and training.
- Undertake neighbourhood profiling to help us better understand your needs and prioritise our funding to the estates that need it most.
- Re-launch our caretaking service with new agreed local standards for communal cleaning.



Leonie Roberts wins best Council garden in Middleton



Community Caretakers in action

PRISON! ME! NO WAY!

We worked with a range of partner agencies including the Police, Fire and Rescue Service and the No Way Trust to run a series of interactive sessions in five upper schools relating to local issues and problems. 750 pupils learnt what influences behaviour and how young people can be in control and make positive choices.

The workshops showed pupils the consequences of crime and anti-social behaviour and what life is like in prison. Hareen from Oulder Hill School was struck by her time in a prison cell. "I felt so enclosed and I definitely don't want to repeat the experience".

Principal Eric Jackson, St Anne's Academy, Hollin said: "The work reinforces the key messages we give out at school to pupils that their actions can change the course of their lives and have a huge impact on themselves, their family and their community."

We also funded a 'Wise Up' Teaching Pack which can be used throughout the year to build up the learning from the one off events and support the national curriculum.



St Anne's Academy pupils experience life in a prison cell

Keeping your home in good repair

What we do:

We carry out a number of different types of repairs and maintenance:

- **Day-to-day repairs** - work to repair a fault or damage to your home.
- **Void repairs** - work carried out on empty properties usually before a new tenant moves in.
- **Planned maintenance** - work planned on the basis of what we know about the properties and when things are likely to need replacing.
- **Improvements** - work needed to bring houses and their surroundings up to modern standards, including adaptations to help access.
- **Servicing** of gas, electrical and other appliances.
- **Re-decoration** of outside woodwork, the common parts of flats, and communal areas to elderly persons' accommodation.

The Repairs & Maintenance Panel (RAMP) meets every two months and is made up of elected tenant representatives from across the borough. This gives tenants a real say in the way we deliver and monitor the improvements and repairs made to your home. RAMP members take part in inspections of completed work and review our performance particularly with regard to tenant satisfaction.

The Home Standard is about:

- Carrying out the necessary works to maintain your home at least to the Government prescribed Decent Homes Standard
- Delivering an efficient repairs and maintenance service that provides opportunity for tenant choice and makes the best use of available money
- Working with our partners to provide adaptations for people who are older or who have disabilities.



Another quality repair

Keeping your home in good repair

What we did in 2009/10:

- Successfully delivered our planned maintenance programme of works meaning 98.3% of homes across the borough now meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard.
- Obtained approval from the Government to bring forward £1.5 million of funding and used this money to deliver projects addressing fuel poverty including replacement double glazing and new energy efficient heating systems.
- Continued to work with our partners to carry out disabled adaptations to meet the needs of individual tenants.
- Renegotiated contract arrangements with our largest suppliers of building materials resulting in projected savings of over £100,000 per year.
- Improved the average time to complete non-urgent responsive repairs from 10.5 days to 10.1 working days.
- Continued to improve the repairs service efficiency, making a £776,000 surplus in 2009/10. This is re-invested into RBH to fund further enhancements to the repairs service.



Taking care of your home

SEVEN SISTERS FEEL THE HEAT WITH A NEW MAKEOVER

We were successful in securing a grant of £1.4 million to provide improved insulation to the College Bank tower blocks. The bid was made in competition with social housing providers from across the country and was one of only a handful approved from organisations based in the North West.

The enhanced cavity insulation installed to the external walls will improve the integrity of the structure and provide tenants with better insulated homes, enabling them to benefit from reduced heating costs. The scheme included other improvements to balconies and external decoration to take advantage of the mobile access towers being utilised.

Sheila Bamford of College Bank Tenants' and Residents' Association, said: "The work has definitely made a big difference in our flat, particularly in the kitchen, which was always cold before. The workmen have been really good and there's only been a bit of inconvenience, considering what a big job it's been."



Tenant Mrs Ashworth watches the finishing touches to her block



Keeping your home in good repair

Some new things we will do in 2010/11:

- Through our subsidiary Brighter Horizons we will construct a number of new properties including six new energy efficient bungalows on Dover Street. This project has been made possible through a successful bid for £360,000 grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) obtained in partnership with the Council.
- Improve the number of homes across the borough that meet the Government’s prescribed Decent Homes Standard to a minimum of 98.9%.
- Revise annual gas servicing to a 10 month programme in order to further ensure tenants’ heating systems are operating safely and efficiently.



New homes on the horizon

BRIGHTER HORIZONS BREAKS NEW GROUND

September 2009 saw the start on site of the first new affordable Council homes in the borough for over 20 years. The new homes on Croft Street will provide 18 bungalows and four family houses and will be developed and owned by our charitable subsidiary Brighter Horizons and managed by RBH.

Some of the residents who occupied the bungalows previously on the site will be returning to the new development. They have been involved in helping to design and shape the scheme and attended the official ground breaking event.

The Government’s Homes and Community Agency (HCA) provided a £1.2 million grant towards the scheme and Deborah McLaughlin, Regional Director for the HCA, said: “I’m pleased we have been able to work so closely with Brighter Horizons and support such an important scheme for Rochdale residents. It is exactly through this kind of investment and partnership working that we will deliver such vitally needed new homes for local communities”.



Councillor Doreen Brophy-Lee and former Council Leader Alan Taylor at the ground breaking event

How we manage your tenancy

What we do:

All the Council's tenancies are let under our conditions of tenancy, which were written by our in-house legal team. First time tenants have an Introductory Tenancy and all others have a Secure Tenancy.

All our properties are allocated through our Choice Based Lettings system which is called HomeChoice.

The Special Needs Rehousing Team help people with specific needs find suitable accommodation.

Our Senior Equality Officer provides specialist surgeries in the Property Shop for people from our black and minority ethnic communities.

We also work with partners on a number of initiatives including:

- Pinpoint, the Greater Manchester Choice Based Lettings scheme, and other schemes to help people move or exchange homes locally, regionally or nationally.
- Intervention Projects aimed at changing the behaviour of families and individuals who are causing nuisance or have other social problems.
- Local Lettings Policies, such as the ones with Turf Hill and Cloverhall, two of our Tenant Management Organisations.
- Providing supported housing and furnished tenancies.

All our policies and procedures about how we allocate our properties and manage your tenancies are available on our website and are also available on request in a variety of formats.

Our Tenants Handbook provides an easy to follow guide to our tenancy management policy, setting out your rights and explaining what is expected of you as tenants.

The Tenancy Standard is about:

- **Making sure rules for letting empty homes are open, fair and transparent both for tenants who want to move from one home to another, and for people waiting for a home**
- **Making applying for a home as easy as possible for everyone**
- **Landlords having support in place to help prevent people losing their homes**
- **Providing all tenants with the most secure form of tenancy that the circumstances allow and having tenancy agreements that meet all the relevant legal requirements.**



Offering a helping hand

How we manage your tenancy

What we did in 2009/10:

- Helped 33 people with disabilities move into homes that were already adapted, saving £243,000 in potential budget.
- Successfully moved 35 vulnerable people out of supported accommodation into secure RBH tenancies.
- Introduced a new way of managing the work we do to let our empty homes, including giving tenants more choice around when they move in and what repairs should be carried out.
- Improved access to other landlords properties in the borough by advertising them on our HomeChoice website.
- Targeted resources at early intervention so that the Homelessness Service significantly reduced the number of households in temporary accommodation from 31 at the end of 2008/09 to 16 at the end of 2009/10.
- Secured funding for a pilot project which will run over the next year to identify and take back both RBH and other landlord's properties which are being illegally sub let.
- Established a Housing Options approach to dealing with applications for rehousing. This allows us to work with applicants and other landlords and agencies to ensure the type of property and services offered best suits the applicant's needs.



Showing tenancy cheats the red card

MAKING THE MOVE

The 'Under Occupancy Scheme' is a partnership with the Home Improvement Agency to help people move into more suitable accommodation. The scheme creates matches by identifying tenants living in homes where there are spare rooms and those who are overcrowded and need more rooms. It is voluntary and we are able to pay removal costs and in some cases help with decorating, carpets and white goods. During this year we were able to assist 21 tenants and we will continue to work with people throughout the next year.

Mr and Mrs Hampton were amongst the first to take part. They moved from a three bedroom home to a bungalow. Mrs Hampton said: "We were really pleased. We had wanted a bungalow for years, as we struggled getting up and down the stairs of our old house, so the move has made a huge difference".

Mr and Mrs Hampton's move has also meant that we have been able to move a family, living in an overcrowded property, into a three bedroom house.



Project staff welcome the Hamptons to their new home

How we manage your tenancy

Some new things we will do in 2010/11:

- Together with our partner agencies, we will introduce a pre-tenancy training and support package to equip our most vulnerable applicants with the skills necessary to successfully manage a tenancy.
- Launch the updated Choice Based Lettings scheme in September 2010, including introducing some priority for people in employment. This is in line with the Government's Fair and Flexible regulations for allocations and the consultation carried out in 2009/10.
- Improve and expand the Housing Options service to support all customers in assessing and securing the best possible housing option for them, including staying in their existing home where appropriate.
- Let our new Brighter Horizons properties as Assured or Assured Shorthold Tenancies.



A warm welcome to new tenants

DEEP IN DEBT? DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE

This year we completed a major review of our front-line housing management services and how they are accessed. As a result we made over £300,000 savings and were able to use some of this money to establish the Money Matters Team.

The Team provide practical advice and support for tenants who are experiencing financial difficulties, like a couple from Heywood concerned about their finances. The team helped them when they felt they had nowhere to turn. "Marie (a Money Matters Advice Officer) helped us with our water debt and got British Gas to insulate our loft, which will cut down on our bills," said Mr and Mrs Spencer.

The Money Matters Team have helped 152 people to manage their finances better, contributing to a reduction in the number of evictions carried out for rent arrears from 137 in 2008/9 to 82 in 2009/10.



Offering financial advice



Value for money

The Value for Money (VFM) Standard is about:

- Making sure we make the best use of the money we have available
- Working with you to ensure we are providing good quality services that meet your needs.

What we do:

We have established a framework in our Value for Money (VFM) strategy to make sure that we are thinking about VFM in everything we do. This helps us to:

- Understand the costs of providing our services, the impact of those services on you, and how we compare with similar organisations.
- Constantly review the way we do things to make sure that time and money is not wasted.
- Work with you to ensure we continue to provide services which you value.

Tenants have the opportunity to help develop VFM initiatives, through activities such as the annual budget consultation events and the Repairs and Maintenance Panel.

As part of our everyday operations:

- The VFM implications of all decisions are highlighted in every report to our Board.
- The Finance and VFM Sub-Committee of the Board look at this area in detail at each meeting.
- Our managers meet regularly to discuss actions specifically designed to improve VFM.
- VFM is an important part of our business plan which sets out how we will continue to be a financially successful organisation.

The Management fee we get from the Council to provide services reduces every year to reflect changes in the number of homes we manage. We set annual efficiency targets so we can continue to deliver our services and any additional savings we make, beyond those required to set a balanced budget, are invested in new and improved services that are important to you.

Savings reinvested into environmental improvements



Before



After

Value for money

What we did in 2009/10:

- Made efficiency savings of over £1 million, most of which we have used to improve services such as the enhanced Caretaking Service, The 1 Shop on Lower Falinge and the Money Matters Team.
- Received just over £800,000 from United Utilities for collecting water charges on their behalf. This money has been spent on environmental improvements including fencing and landscaping schemes.
- Our stores facility for repairs materials was recognised in an independent report as offering good VFM, so much so that other local firms use it. This generates additional income for us and helps local employers.
- Changed the way we produce manufactured joinery and made a saving of £107,000.
- The STATUS survey told us 79.6% of tenants are satisfied with the value for money of their rent.



Our stores team

INVEST TO SAVE

We are always looking at ways to reduce the impact our services have on the environment, as a recent purchase demonstrates.

Tony Collinge, Contracts Manager, said: "We have regular discussions with Wheeldon's, our waste management partner, on how to reduce costs and increase recycling and our new baling machine does just that. It cost £2,170 and will have paid for itself within 12 months. We will save £1,430 a year on our disposal costs and will sell the cardboard for £45 a tonne."



Above: Operative Bill Howarth loads the new baling machine
Below: All packed up



Value for money

Some new things we will do in 2010/11:

- Involve more tenants in deciding how we spend money. £50,000 has been set aside for tenants to directly decide on how it is to be spent. This is known as participatory budgeting.
- Through our joint venture company Safeguard Security Solutions Ltd (SSSL) we will deliver a programme to provide all our properties with a monitored alarm system. This scheme provides excellent VFM as it is delivered at a significantly lower cost than in the private sector. It will also reduce the costs of keeping empty properties secure and is provided at no extra cost to you.
- Undertake VFM reviews of the repairs service and our administration resources.
- Launch our employee VFM suggestion reward scheme to generate ideas to improve services and make savings.



Installing new monitored alarms

PROJECT VIP_{er} (VOID IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME)

We reviewed the process for managing empty properties which resulted in us reducing the time between someone moving out of their home and the new tenant picking up the keys.

Being able to get through our processes more efficiently and being able to rehouse people sooner, means that we reduced the costs of securing empty properties and also reduced the amount of rent income we lost. Over £100,000 was saved by speeding up this process in 2009/10.



Moving day

A well run organisation

What we do:

For RBH to do its best for its tenants and the communities it serves it is really important that it is a well run organisation. This is achieved by a volunteer Board of Directors, chaired by Noel Chambers, which oversee the running of the company which is led by Chief Executive, Gareth Swarbrick.

Noel replaced previous Chair, Ian Agnew when he was elected as Chair of the RBH Board this summer. He will be in post for the next three years. Noel has over 20 years experience in the social housing sector and so brings considerable expertise to the Boardroom.

The Board is made up of six tenants elected by their fellow tenants, four Council Members and three independent members, like Noel, who are selected because of their specialist skills.

Noel said: “The job of the Board is to ensure RBH remains focused on continuing to improve services for our tenants and making sure our regeneration activity is aligned with the strategic plans of the Council and its partners.

“The Board also consider the key issues affecting Council tenants in Rochdale and RBH as an organisation. Most recently, in the light of central Government proposals around the funding of Council housing through the Housing Revenue Account, we have been working with the Council and tenant representatives on the Investment and Involvement Commission to develop a shared view about the future ownership and management of the Council’s housing stock and the role of RBH as the largest social landlord in the borough.

“Ensuring that the Board is continually improving and able to meet further challenges is also vital to the future of RBH. Board members will continue to actively lead both processes through the Commission and the Board Excellence Review Group.”

The Governance and Financial Viability Standard is about:

- Making sure the organisation is run and managed properly and delivers outcomes for tenants in an effective and accountable way
- Making sure the organisation manages its money and other resources efficiently so that it remains financially secure.



Noel Chambers



A well run organisation

A Tenant Board Member Perspective

“My name is Tim Byrne and I have been a tenant Board Member for the last two years.

“All the key decision making for the company is done at Board level which means that we, as tenants, have real influence and responsibility for decisions which affect the way RBH is run and its future development. We are also responsible for monitoring how RBH performs.

“For example, in the last year on the Board I have:

- Undertaken the recruitment and appointment of the Director of Resources - a key senior management appointment.
- Helped set up Safeguard Security Solutions Ltd and Brighter Horizons.
- Been appointed to the Finance and Value for Money Board Sub Committee, which has allowed me to understand and influence how our money is spent.
- Been appointed to the Staffing Sub Committee where I have been involved in a number of staff related activities.

“To do this work to the best of my ability I have undertaken training on a range of subjects and taken up the really useful mentoring programme. I have also had the opportunity to attend a number of local and national events which have helped me gain a real understanding of the housing world and the framework within which RBH operates.

“Being a Board member is very rewarding but requires a lot of dedication and hard work and is often very challenging, especially when difficult decisions have to be made. You have to be committed to wanting to make a real difference to RBH and the communities it serves and this often means dedicating a large proportion of your time to it. You have to recognise that the Board needs to operate as a partnership to be successful and that as a Board member you have to concentrate on the wider issues that affect all our tenants.

“I am looking forward to the next year and the fresh challenges it will bring.”

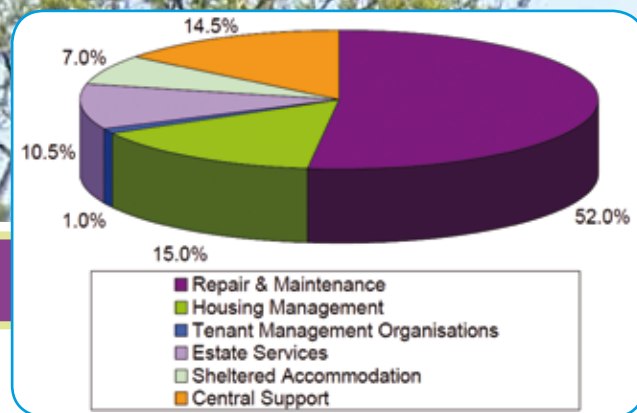


Tim Byrne



Moira Richardson,
our Governance Manager

A well run organisation



How we spend our money:

Our income from the Management Fee, other charges to the Council and from external sources is £35.1m. The table below explains how we spent this money during 2009/10. At the end of the year we had a surplus of £875,000 which will be used to fund additional services in future years.

31 March 2010

	£ 000	Description of costs
Turnover	35,104	Income from Management Fee, other charges to the Council and external sources
Operating costs		
Repairs and Maintenance		
Responsive Repairs	9,375	Day to day repairs expenditure and repairs to empty properties
Planned Repairs	2,088	The cost of planned maintenance
Capital Repairs	5,136	Major repairs and improvements to your homes
Other repair costs	1,113	The cost of repairs overheads
Housing Management	5,209	The cost of general Housing Management, Legal, HomeChoice and Customer Involvement services
Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)	368	Cost of housing management delegated to TMOs
Estate Services	3,644	The cost of caretaking, grounds maintenance, alarms, concierge and CCTV monitoring
Sheltered Accommodation	2,324	The cost of the warden service including premises
Central Support Services	4,972	Finance, Human Resources, ICT, Policy, Governance and other central costs
Total operating costs	34,229	
Excess of income over expenditure	875	This surplus will be used to fund additional services in future years



Our local offers:

We have already gone some way towards developing our Local Offers with tenants, for example:

- Tenants on Cloverhall, Hollin and Turf Hill have their own management agreements.
- RBH's Priority Areas Team provide additional support services on some estates and have drop-in centres on Kirkholt and Lower Falinge.
- College Bank has a concierge service.
- A number of Local Lettings Policies are in place.

We also have some other Local Offers in development and these will be delivered during the next year:

- We will be updating the Turf Hill and Cloverhall management agreements.
- We will be trialling participatory budgeting with an initial budget of £50,000.

We will be working with tenants during the coming months to develop new parts of the Local Offers and confirm the continued value of existing ones. Initially this work will focus on agreeing with tenants what 'local' means and will feature areas of:

- The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- The Home Standard.
- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

In the STATUS survey you identified your top three priorities, i.e. repairs and maintenance, overall quality of your home and dealing with anti-social behaviour. We will use this information to form the basis for our discussions with you. In order to do this we will:

- Carry out a further consultation during the Celebration and Information Day in September 2010 to gain more understanding of these priorities.
- Continue this work through RBH Involve.
- Work with the Service Improvement Panels, the Area Panels, the Tenant Management Organisations and other focus groups to develop these priorities into Local Offers for our communities.

The TSA wants all landlords to work with their tenants to identify areas of the Standards where they can tailor the service they provide to meet local needs and priorities. These are known as Local Offers. What is meant by 'local' is for the landlord and its tenants to decide, it could be a borough, a township, an estate or even a particular group of people.







Finding out your views






Disability working group




How are we performing?

Rent collection and arrears	How did we do?	2009/10	2008/09
We aimed to collect 97.9% of rent arrears (includes arrears brought forward).		98.1%	97.4%
We wanted to reduce rent arrears and aim for current tenants rent arrears to be less than 2.15% of rent due.	 	1.90%	2.2%
We wanted to reduce the number of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears to below 0.74% of all tenants.		0.60%	1.0%


There has been an increase in the amount of rent collected and a reduction in the number of tenants evicted for rent arrears. This demonstrates the positive impact of early intervention in arrears cases and the work of the Money Matters Team.

Repairs and maintenance to your homes	How did we do?	2009/10	2008/09
We aimed to complete 98.0% of all repairs within agreed timescales.		97.4%	97.4%
We aimed to be keep 96.7% of appointments for repair jobs requiring access, for which an appointment was made.		86.7%	92.5%
We aimed to complete non urgent repairs in an average of 10 days.		10.1 days	10.5 days

Our ability to achieve our targets was affected by the adverse weather conditions between December and February. This resulted in a 39% increase in the number of urgent repairs which meant it was necessary to suspend repairs appointments to meet this demand.


Empty property management	How did we do?	2009/10	2008/09
We aimed to relet empty homes within 25 days.		27.8 days	27 days
We aimed to have less than 1.0% of our homes empty at any given time.	 	0.9%	1.0%


The bad weather also impacted on our ability to let properties. Properties were empty longer than normal due to difficulties with access for repairs and tenants' viewings.


Customer service	How did we do?	2009/10	2008/09
We aimed to respond to 98.5% of all complaints within 15 working days.		93.9 %	97.6%


A small number of very complex complaints which took longer than normal to resolve have impacted on our ability to meet this target. However, we did complete complaints in an average of 8 working days. A new complaints procedure will be launched in August 2010 with one of its aims being to improve performance.

KEY TO PERFORMANCE

 We are very pleased with our performance in this area as we are beating our target.

 We are satisfied with our performance as it is meeting or is close to target.

 We are disappointed with our performance as we have not met our target in this area, but we will work hard to improve on this.

 Our performance puts us in the top 25% of ALMOs.



About our properties and tenants

The Council has a total of 13,844 properties. The majority, 13,648 of these, are managed by RBH and 196 are managed by Cloverhall Tenants Association Co-operative Ltd.

It's important we understand who our customers are. This helps us identify what our customer needs are now and in the future and will assist us in developing our services to support those needs.

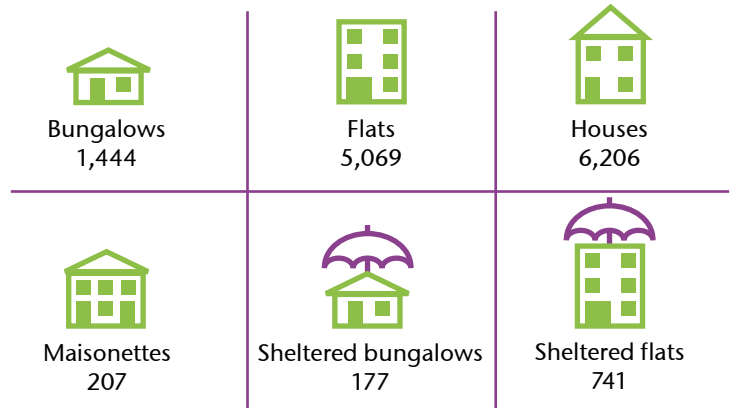
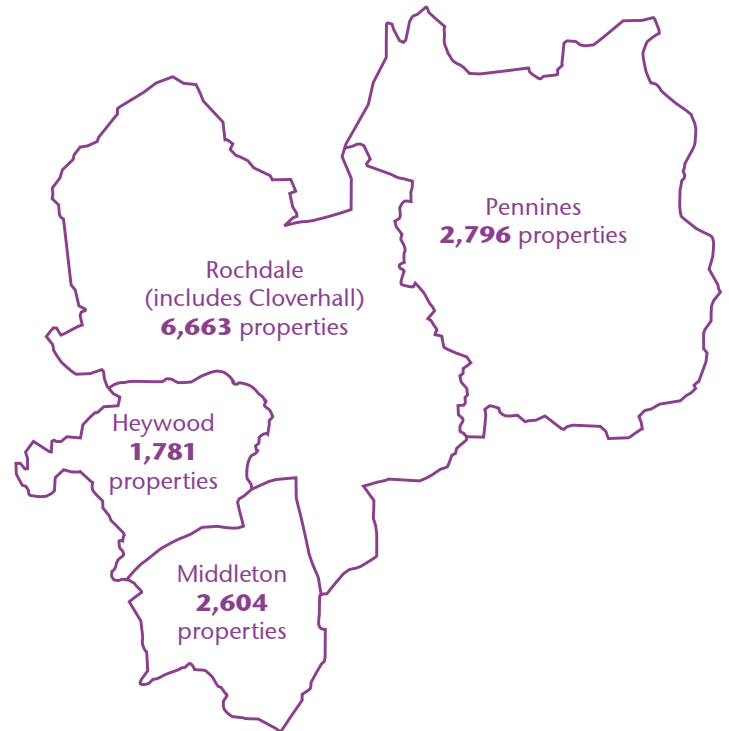
To improve our services and make sure they are fair to everyone, we are collecting information from tenants about their gender, ethnicity, religion, age, etc. We are required to collect this information by law. We publish summary data on our website.

We use this information to:

- Review our services and the impact they may have on people. If the service, strategy, policy, procedure or function has the potential to affect individuals unfairly we take action to address this and ensure that they are not disadvantaged or discriminated against.
- Tailor services to individuals' needs and find out how we can improve the way we communicate with tenants.

We are working hard to increase the information we hold and during 2010/11 our efforts will include carrying out a second mail-out of our fair service monitoring form as well as continuing to contact you by telephone and face to face.

If you have not already supplied this information please help us by providing it when we contact you or filling in the new online form.



Total number of properties = 13,844



Jargon buster

ALMO

Arms Length Management Organisation – manages properties on behalf of the Council. RBH is an ALMO

ASB

Anti-social behaviour

Benchmarking

Organisations compare their performance against each other to see whether they are performing well or need to improve

Brighter Horizons

A charitable organisation set up by RBH to provide new and affordable housing across the borough

CIH

Chartered Institute of Housing (the professional organisation for housing employees)

CLG

Communities and Local Government (the Government department responsible for social housing)

Decent Homes

This is the (minimum) property standard set by the Government for all social housing

Equality Impact Assessments

We review all of our policies and procedures to ensure that they do not adversely affect any groups of tenants because of their race, gender (including gender identity), disability (including people with caring responsibilities), religion / belief, age or sexual orientation

HCA

Homes and Communities Agency. A government body responsible for overseeing grant funding for housing

HouseMark

Provides independent advice and support and compares the performance of housing organisations

Local Lettings

Properties in a particular local area let outside the main lettings policy

RBH

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing

Registered Provider

The new term by which all landlords who are registered with the Tenant Services Authority will be known

Social Housing

Rented housing provided by Councils and housing associations

SSSL

Safeguard Security Solutions Ltd is a company set up by RBH in partnership with a private company to provide a monitored alarm service across the borough

STATUS

The standardised tenant satisfaction survey that the Government required all social housing organisations to carry out. The results referred to in this report are from the 2009/10 survey

Tenancy types

Assured

The most secure type of non Local Authority tenancy

Assured Shorthold

Non secure, non Local Authority, short term tenancy (these will be converted to Assured tenancies after 12 months provided none of the conditions of tenancy have been broken)

Introductory

Local Authority, non secure short term tenancy (automatically becomes secure after 12 months provided none of the Conditions of Tenancy have been broken)

Secure

The most secure form of tenancy, usually only Local Authority

TMO

Tenant Management Organisations are groups of tenants who have elected to take on some or all of the housing management role for their estates

TSA

Tenant Services Authority (inspects and works with organisations to ensure they are involving tenants and offering an excellent service) www.tenantservicesauthority.org

VFM

Value for Money



Where can I find out more?

You can find out more by visiting our website www.rbh.org.uk for more information about anything you have read in this report.

Also on the website you can find out about our Board, our Management Team and keep up to date with our latest news. You can also access a range of online services.

For those people interested in looking at our key strategies and plans, documents such as the Corporate Plan, VFM Strategy, Business Plan, Consultation and Customer Involvement Strategies are available to view and download.

All of the information is also available on request from any of the people listed below and also in a variety of formats as set out on the back page of this report.

Who to contact

If you want more detail about any of the information in this report please contact the following people:

Section of this report	Contact
Introductions	Tenant Services Authority - www.tenantservicesauthority.org Tenants Editorial Panel – John Rodgers (01706) 273827 john.rodgers@rbh.org.uk
Involving tenants	Andy Wadsworth (01706) 273818 andy.wadsworth@rbh.org.uk
Our neighbourhoods and communities	Environment - Deborah Jamieson (01706) 714460 deborah.jamieson@rbh.org.uk ASB - Jonathan Walton (01706) 273951 jonathan.walton@rbh.org.uk Partnership working - Sue Kershaw (01706) 273829 sue.kershaw@rbh.org.uk
Keeping your home in good repair	Ian Adshead (01706) 273940 ian.adshead@rbh.org.uk
How we manage your tenancy	Rehousing – Julie Sandham (01706) 273771 julie.sandham@rbh.org.uk Tenancy support and tenancy issues - Jane Allen (01706) 273804 jane.allen@rbh.org.uk
Value for Money	Ian Metcalfe (01706) 273802 ian.metcalfe@rbh.org.uk
A well run organisation	Board matters - Moira Richardson (01706) 273811 moira.richardson@rbh.org.uk Management Team – Pauline Holt (01706) 273801 pauline.holt@rbh.org.uk Finance - Ian Metcalfe (01706) 273802 ian.metcalfe@rbh.org.uk
Our local offers	John Rodgers (01706) 273827 john.rodgers@rbh.org.uk
How are we performing?	Chris Baldock (01706) 273837 chris.baldock@rbh.org.uk



এই রিপোর্টের তথ্য অনুরোধের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে 'পলিসি এবং পরফরমেন্স টিমের' নিকট থেকে 01706 273829 নম্বরে ফোন করে কমিউনিটি ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে, অডিও বা কম্পিউটার ডিস্ক আকারে পাওয়া যায়।

اس رپورٹ میں درج معلومات گزارش پر کمیونٹی کی دیگر زبانوں، بڑے حروف، آڈیو یا کمپیوٹر ڈسک پر 'پالیسی اینڈ پرفارمنس ٹیم' سے نمبر 01706 273829 پر فون کر کے حاصل کی جاسکتی ہیں۔

Raport przedstawia Państwu nasze osiągnięcia w okresie 2009-10r., oraz opisuje nasze plany na nadchodzący rok. Informacje po polsku są do nabycia od zespołu d.s. Polityki „Policy Team” – zamawiając pod nrem: 01706 273 829.

Este relatório fala sobre o que conseguimos realizar durante o ano 2009/10 e dos nossos planos para o próximo ano. Esta informação encontra-se disponível na sua língua, pode requisitar na Equipa Reguladora no número 01706 273829.

Ce rapport vous informe de ce que nous avons accompli pendant 2009/2010 et de nos projets pour l'année à venir. Les informations sont disponibles dans votre langue sur simple demande auprès de l'Equipe de Politique Générale (Policy Team) au 01706 273829.

The information in this report is available on request in community languages, large print, audio or on computer disk from the Policy and Performance Team on 01706 273829.



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Building Stronger Communities

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